



USAID
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AFGHANISTAN

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

January 1-January 15, 2010

INFRASTRUCTURE

Girls School Rebuilt after Earthquake: Girls in Sherzad district, Nangarhar province, will return to a new, safe school after this year's winter break. Their original school was severely damaged during an earthquake in April 2009, which also resulted in the loss of 20 lives and the destruction of many homes and other buildings. USAID, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and International Relief and Development (IRD), immediately began work to build a new, earthquake-resistant school for the girls.

Despite the difficulties of construction in an area known for insurgent activity, USAID and its partners ensured the safe, rapid completion of the Sherzad Girls Middle School. The new earthquake-resistant, eight-room school provides classrooms for up to 400 students in two shifts and a safe place to study. Additional construction work is ongoing in the area, as the Sherzad Boys High School also suffered damage during the earthquake. USAID is committed to ensuring that Sherzad's children have the opportunity to receive an education in secure, well-built schools.



The new Sherzad Girls Middle School in Nangarhar province.

PHOTO: USAID/CHEF



Members of the Lash Wa Juwayn Community Development Council show their appreciation for the canal cleaning project.

PHOTO: USAID/ADP/SW

AGRICULTURE

Water Flows Again in Lash Wa Juwayn Canal:

When Afghan communities set their own development priorities, stability and trust are likely to follow. USAID works with village elders to design development projects that meet the needs of the community, and engages community members in the implementation process. Recently, in cooperation with the Farah Governor's office, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and the Lash Juwayn Community Development Council, USAID rehabilitated the Lash Wa Juwayn Canal in Farah. Local laborers received a daily wage and the necessary tools to rehabilitate 20 kilometers of the canal and rebuild a 720-meter retaining wall.

The villagers celebrated the first flow of water in the canal, which had been full of silt and unusable for 30 years. Thanks to improved irrigation provided by the canal, more than 13,000 hectares will be available for farming – an area of approximately 60 square miles.



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Nearly 7,100 families (approximately 40,000 individuals) will benefit from the improved irrigation and increased food production and farming income. Upon completion of the project, members of the Lash Wa Juwayn District Community Development Council presented a certificate of appreciation to USAID and the Alternative Development Project – Southwest for its support of the canal rehabilitation.

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM

Empowering Women in Zabul: Language and math skills, health education, and vocational training are all part of an USAID's drive to boost female literacy and capacity in the insecure southern province of Zabul. In southern Afghanistan, a weak government presence has left many women fearful of radical social strictures. Countering this fear is key to stabilization efforts in the province, where USAID and its partners are working to build links between citizens, empowering them to envision – and pursue – alternatives to conflict. One such effort is providing English-language and computer training to 60 female graduates of the Bibi Khala High School, who in turn will each mentor two current students. The project complements another initiative that is offering health education, literacy, and almond-cleaning training to 60 more women in the province. Through these programs, women in Zabul will receive the education and jobs skills that they need to play an active role in building a stable Afghanistan.



Women learn to clean and process raisins in Zabul.

PHOTO: USAID/LGCD



Newly constructed stalls in Almar Market in Faryab.

PHOTO: USAID/ASMED

ECONOMIC GROWTH

New Marketplaces in Nangarhar and Faryab

Provinces: Safe, well-built markets are essential to business growth and needed places in each community where people buy food and clothing for their families. With financial support from USAID and local shopkeepers, 10 new market stalls were recently installed at Almar Market in Almar district, Faryab province. The new market stalls allow the people of Almar to buy grocery items locally; previously residents had to travel long distances to the provincial capital of Maimana for these items. The construction of the new shops created 20 permanent jobs and a number of temporary construction jobs.



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Additionally, a USAID grant facilitated the construction of new stalls at the Dara-e-Noor Bazaar in the eastern province of Nangarhar. In addition to creating 10 small businesses and providing permanent job opportunities for at least 20 people, the market gives residents of Dara-e-Noor improved access to purchasing daily necessities.

USAID provides \$130 Million in Loans to Support Enterprises in Afghanistan: Since its launch in September 2006 until its closing in December 2009, USAID's Agriculture, Rural Investment, and Enterprise Strengthening (ARIES) program disbursed more than \$130 million in loans to micro, small, medium, and larger enterprises throughout Afghanistan.

Implemented in partnership with the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the ARIES program expanded public access to financial services, making loans available to Afghans who previously had no access to financial services. The program also helped to create a strong private sector foundation upon which to develop a sustainable finance system with the capacity to provide a range of financial services. In total, ARIES disbursed 222,000 loans through 119 financial service outlets in 24 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, and resulted in the creation of more than 226,000 jobs.



Shura leaders and community members attend an IIFC orientation in Samangan province.

PHOTO: USAID/WOCCU

The accomplishments of ARIES project will be advanced by USAID's new Rural Finance and Cooperative Development (RUFCD) project, implemented by the World Council of Credit Unions (WOCCU). RUFCD will expand access to financial services in underserved and priority districts, including opening 15 new Islamic Investment and Financial Cooperatives (IIFCs) over the next two years. IIFCs are community-based, member-owned institutions that provide a range of Islam-compliant financial services to their members. Community-outreach programs, such as providing medical services to IIFC members, are funded by a small fee that credit union members pay in the process of repaying their loans. IIFC members determine how they will use these proceeds – intended to be used for charitable purposes – to serve community needs. In the first year, the project will open IIFCs in Hilmand, Uruzgan, Kandahar, Logar, and Paktya provinces.